
BASICS ON RASHIS IN VEDIC ASTROLOGY

What is the meaning of the word rashi and what are they?

Rashi in Jyotish or sign in western astrology comes from the sanskrit words *ra* - *shi* which is composed of two half's, *ra* and *shi*. *Ra* is indicating Rāhu or northern lunar node; and *Shi* is derived from Shiki which is one of the names of Ketu, or southern lunar node. All the rashis are hence indicating this material creation in which we exist from beginning to the end of our lives. But the question rises, what do we need for creation? For every creation we need mother and father, or in astrology, Moon and Sun, or in mythology Shiva and Parvati. These are the main cause for basic principles in Jyotish like rashis and nakshatras. And the mentioned nodes are nothing else then astrological point created based on movement of Sun and Moon. Then a good question rises why do we have exactly 12 rashis (signs) formed from the movement of these two luminaries, and why do we call them twelve **suns signs**? 12 rashis are defined by twelve conjunctions (called Ananta masa) or twelve full Moons (called Shuklanta masa)¹ depending on the tradition we chose to follow. Or in other words, we need 30 days from one full moon to another, to form that what we know as a month (Vedic - masa); and exactly 12 such months to form a year (Vedic - varsha) or full cycle of 360 degrees.

Once when we know the meaning of the word itself, it is important to know what are rashis and what are they signifying? Just like it is mentioned previously, rashis are showing all material creation and all the resources in the world. Here the twelve suns signs are in very strong connection with what is known as *dvadasha aditya* or twelve adityas. Adityas are the cause of all the resources which are recognized in twelve signs. For example, Varuna aditya is corresponding to 4th sign or karka and it is indicating the one who is ruling over the water or jala tatwa, this sign is also known as sign which symbolizes creation (water is necessary condition for creation), same place where we are seeing mother in chart, and on the other hand, this sign is also corresponding to the sukha sthana (4th bhava). Another example: Mitra aditya is corresponding to 3rd sign or mithuna, Mitra holds the meaning of the one being friendly to all, indicates contracts, agreements, etc., whilst mithuna rashi falls in 3rd bhava in Kalapurusha and indicates writings, documents and communication, this sign gives very friendly and social posture when prominent. Hence, twelve adityas are cause off all the resources whilst the twelve suns signs are the resources themselves.

To say suns signs are signifying resources is very natural being that the Sun itself is the main giver, resource and father as depicted in planetary cabinet on lower level; or as naisargika atma karaka² representing Soul on a very high level of understanding the grahas³. From this statement other meaning of rashi is coming into the picture and that is quality and quantity of resources indicated by different signs which is fully depending on rest of the chart in question. For example, Lagna or ascendant is indicating vitality, longevity, intelligence, fame, etc. Planet placed in the Lagna will either increase given significations or decrease them; overall it will modify the results and experiences.

¹ The Vedic month's are defined by some authors as starting from Amavasya or conjunction of Sun and Moon, or from Poornima or full Moon where Moon and Sun are in 180 degrees distance.

² Significator for Soul in chara karaka scheme.

³ Graha is snaskrit word used for seven planets and two nodes.

Different characteristics of rashis:

Here we come to the main significations and qualities which are composed into every rashi. But before we enter into this vast subject, names of the rashis should be given and from the names many of the significations can be derived. Next table consist of English as well as Vedic names given in jyotish classical works like BPHS and Jataka Parijata⁴:

Sign names	Vedic names, BPHS	Other names given by Jataka Parijata
Aries	Mesha	Aja, Adya, Kriya, Tumbura
Taurus	Vrishaba	Uksha, Tavuru, Gokula
Gemini	Mithuna	Dwandava, Jutuma, Yama, Yuga
Cancer	Karka	Kulira, Karkataka, Karkata
Leo	Simha	Kanthirava, Mrigendra, Leya
Virgo	Kanya	Pathona, Ramani, Taruni
Libra	Tula	Thauli, Vanik, Juka, Dhata
Scorpio	Vrischika	Ali, Vrischika, Kaurpi, Kita
Sagittarius	Dhanus	Dhanus, Chapa, Sarasana
Capricorn	Makara	Mriga, Mrigasya, Makraka, Nakra
Aquarius	Kumbha	Kumbha, Gata, Thoyadara
Pieces	Meena	Meena, Antya, Mathsya, Prithuroma, Jhasha

- 1) One of the first teachings of sage Parashara is that the twelve given signs from Mesha to Meena are the limbs of the indescribable Vishnu, the Time Personified, and hence natural order of twelve signs are also called Kalapurusha. These twelve rashis beginning from Mesha are respectively showing the head, face, arms, heart, stomach, hips, and space below navel, the private parts, thighs, knees, ankles and feet of the Kalapurusha.
- 2) Starting with divisions first comes division on two groups, or male or female signs based on oddity. One group is that of masculine or odd signs starting from mesha and these are mesha, mithuna, simha, tula, dhanus and kumbha. Whilst feminine signs are even signs starting from vrishaba and these are vrishaba, karka, kanya, vrischika, makara and meena. To this we can add the exception in usage of signs in Saptamsha chart (D-7) in ascertaining the sex of a child. In Saptamsha the only exception is given for karka and meena where even though even signs are showing the male issue; and mithuna and kumbha who are showing female issues even though they are odd and hence should suggest male issues.
- 3) Next division is division on three groups and it is based on gunas of the signs. There are three main qualities which are corresponding to the signs movement. Rajas is the first among them whose main significations are movement, creation, desires, action, etc. Starting from mesha every forth sign has the same guna hence the rajasic signs are mesha, karka, tula and makara and these are also known as movable or *chara* signs. Satwa gunas main quality is sustenance and balance, and signs which are satwic by nature are mithuna, kanya, dhanus and meena. These are also known as dual of *dwishabhava* signs. And finally, Tamas guna has characteristics of decaying, destruction, immovability and death. These signs are vrishaba, simha, vrischika and kumbha⁵ and they are also known as fixed or *sthira* signs.
- 4) After division on three, there is division on four groups based on tatwas. These are as follows: agni (fire), prithivi (earth), vayu (air) and jala (water) signs, whilst the fifth tatwa is that of akash (ether) which is present as an binding force in all twelve signs. Agni signs are: mesha, simha and dhanus.

⁴ In further writings author will use Sanskrit terms for rashis.

⁵ This principle corresponds to well known kendra paraspara principle.

Prithivi signs are vrishaba, kanya and makara. Vayu signs are mithuna, tula and kumbha and watery signs are karka, vrischika and meena⁶.

- 5) Division based on yuga indicated by different rashis is as follows:
- Mesha, simha and dhanus are indicating Satya (Krta) yuga;
 - Karka, vrischika and meena are indicating Treta yuga;
 - Tula, kumbha and mithuna are indicating Dvapara;
 - Makara, vrishaba and kanya are indicating Kali yuga.
- 6) Next chart is showing day and night strong signs. Day strong signs are: simha, kanya, tula, vrischika, kumbha and meena; whilst night strong signs are: mesha, vrishaba, mithuna, karka, dhanus and makara. This knowledge has multiple usages, from determination of strength of planets to very specific use in the Nashta Jataka principles.

Pisces (Day)	Aries (Night)	Taurus (Night)	Gemini (Night)
Aquarius (Day)	Day/Night Signs		Cancer (Night)
Capricorn (Night)			Leo (Day)
Sagittarius (Night)	Scorpio (Day)	Libra (Day)	Virgo (Day)

- 7) Rising of signs is a very important division and it is determined based on the part of the body with which each sign is rising. This knowledge is useful and it is almost unavoidable tool in usage of dashas, especially Narayana dasha system.

There are three groups of signs or:

1. Those who are head rising or shirshodaya: simha, kanya, tula, vrischika and mithuna;
2. Those who are back rising or prishtodaya: mesha, vrishaba, karka, dhanus, makara and kumbha;
3. Those who are rising with head and tail in the same time or ubhayodaya: meena.

Same can be seen from the following chart⁷:

Pisces (both)	Aries (back)	Taurus (back)	Gemini (head)
Aquarius (back)	Udaya (Rising)		Cancer (back)
Capricorn (back)			Leo (head)
Sagittarius (back)	Scorpio (head)	Libra (head)	Virgo (head)

⁶ This principle corresponds to well known trikona or samdharmi principle.

⁷ Chart is taken from the book: 'My Masters words', by Visti Larsen.

- 8) All the signs can be divided in to biped, quadruped, centipede and water gliding. This division is important in ascertaining the nature of the sign, type of intelligence as well as appearance of the same. Human or so called biped signs are: kanya which represents young girl; mithuna which represents twins or human pair; kumbha which represents man with pot filled with water; tula depicted as person holding the scales, first half of dhanus is also human, this sign is depicted as half human holding the bow with later half of a horse. Quadruped or four footed signs are: mesha is depicted as a goat; vrishaba is depicted as a bull; simha is depicted as lion; dhanus later half is depicted as that of a horse and same holds for makara who is depicted with upper half being that of a deer. Centipede also called keeta rashis are: karka which represents crab and vrischika which represents scorpion. Water gliding signs are: latter half of makara represented by the body of crocodile and meena which is represented as two fishes swimming in opposite directions. All the human signs are good for intelligence and intellectual work or placed in Lagna; all the biped signs are good for hard work or placed in 10th house; all centipede signs are good in pursuing there own desires and passions; and all the water gliding signs are good for comfort and stability in life or placed in 4th house.

- 9) Castes or Varnas of the signs are as it follows:

Castes:	Signs:
Kshatriya	Mesha, simha, dhanus
Shudra	Vrishaba, kanya, makara
Vaishya	Mithuna, tula, kumbha
Brhami	Karka, vrischika, meena

- 10) Lordships over the signs are assigned to all seven planets from Sun to Saturn, whilst co-lordships over vrischika and kumbha are assigned to Ketu and Rahu respectively.

Grahas:	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
Signs:	Simha	Karka	Mesha, Vrischika	Mithuna, Kanya	Dhanus, Meena	Vrishaba, thula	Makara, kumbha

- 11) Directions of the signs are of great importance in ascertaining in which physical direction we can aspect happenings to take place. They are as follows: mesha and his trines are indicating east; karka and his trines are indicating north; tula and his trines are indicating west and makara and his trines are indicating south.

In the same time, all the movable or chara signs are indicating long distances; all dual or dwishabhava signs are indicating medium distance and all fixed or sthira signs are indicating short distances, or place close to home.

- 12) Colours, complexion and length of the all twelve signs are given in table below and they are helpful tool in ascertaining physical characteristics of the signs:

Rashis:	Colours ⁸ :	Complexion:	Length:
Mesha	Blood Red	Reddish	Short
Vrishaba	White	Dark	Short
Mithuna	Grass Green	Dark	Medium
Karka	Reddish white	Fair	Medium
Simha	Yellow white	Reddish	Long
Kanya	Grey	Dark	Long

⁸ Colours are given as per the colour of the sign itself whilst complexion is given based on planetary lordship.

Tula	Black	Dark	Long
Vrischika	Yellow	Reddish	Long
Dhanus	Golden	Fair	Medium
Makara	Variegated	Bluish	Medium
Kumbha	Violet	Bluish	Short
Meena	Sky blue	Fair	Short

13) Mental description of signs is a vast subject and pages and pages can be written on the same. Instead in this article importance will be imposed on understanding of the principles in behind the same. One of the very first principles of understanding the characteristics of the signs lies in Kalapurusha or natural order of signs (a); graha lording the sign (b); as well as all characteristic mentioned in previous divisions of the signs based on guna, tatwa, symbol, etc. For example, it is said that dhanus rashi is one of the most truthful signs in the zodiac, and the reason for that lies in the fact that this is only sign for which lagna and 4th house are lorded by the satwic graha and hence Kapata/cheating yoga, based on signs, is excluded (a). Dhanus rashi on lagna shows people who are naturally religious and prone to higher learning's as a blessing of his lord Jupiter (b). Very often they are performing the role of a teacher or adviser; this is dwishabhava rashi which is indicating interaction between guru and shishya or Jupiter and Mercury, who are indeed form Guru-shishya yoga (a). And the same shows the nature of Mercurial lagnas where there are behaving like a child, student, they are always seeking for some new information's and learning and are very curious by nature. Dhanus is honourable, righteousness, optimistic and very dharmic oriented which comes from the fact that in natural Kalapurusha this sign is placed in 9th house of dharma and bhagya (luck). They can be very spiritual because of Ketu being exalted in dhanus but also disobeying towards authorities and rebellion when Rahu instead gets his saying. People with strong dhanus quality can be very balanced (satwic nature) but also fiery because this rashi is after all Agni or fiery sign; he has mesha sign in 5th house of chitta which gives to this sign ambition, energy, sharp mind; and simha in 9th house of leading principles in life which makes this people to be very dignified and generous, and make them want to be a giver in life.

Sensitive points from where one should ascertain person's character and nature are lagna and Paka Lagna (sign in which lagna lord is placed) in the Rasi chart and lagna in Navamsha chart, where it is important to have in mind planetary influence on the same and given results modify accordingly.

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